

HOUSE JOINT RESOLUTION 1276

By Windle

A RESOLUTION to name a certain segment of U.S. Highway 127 in Fentress County in honor of the late Representative S. Thomas Burnett.

WHEREAS, from time to time, the members of this General Assembly have seen fit to name certain highways and bridges in honor of those exemplary public servants who have contributed significantly to the growth and prosperity of their respective communities; and

WHEREAS, a Tennessean deserving of this honor is Sam Thomas "Tommy" Burnett of Fentress County; and

WHEREAS, born and raised in Goodlettsville, S. Thomas Burnett served as a part-time Church of Christ preacher and farmer in Fentress County as well as an attorney in Jamestown after receiving his law degree from the University of Tennessee; and

WHEREAS, Tommy Burnett was twenty-eight years of age when he was first elected to the State House of Representatives in 1970; and

WHEREAS, he quickly established himself as a gifted politician with his strong oratorical skills and effectiveness at working across party lines, becoming a trusted lieutenant of House Speaker Ned McWherter and serving in the roles of House Floor Leader and then House Majority Leader during the administrations of Governors Ray Blanton, Lamar Alexander, and Ned McWherter; and

WHEREAS, Representative Burnett was given much of the credit for winning passage of major education legislation proposed by Governor Alexander, nursing home reforms, the Tennessee Sentencing Commission Act, tort reform, and laws mandating the use of seatbelts; and

WHEREAS, he was immensely popular with and respected by his constituents, with the clearest example of his popularity being his reelection to the House of Representatives by an

eighteen-point margin while serving ten months in a federal prison in Alabama on a misdemeanor conviction of failing to file income taxes; and

WHEREAS, upon his release, Tommy Burnett resumed his legislative and legal career, and after returning to the Capitol, he again began to climb the leadership ladder, serving as the first House Majority Whip, a position created for him; and

WHEREAS, his once bright political future came to an end with his conviction resulting from the Operation Rocky Top investigation by the FBI; and

WHEREAS, released from federal prison for a second time, Mr. Burnett worked to regain his reputation and career, landing back in a government relations job while being a regular commentator on *Teddy Bart's Round Table* radio program and eventually earning the restoration of his law license after several public officials, including former Governor Ned McWherter, testified before the Tennessee Supreme Court on his behalf; and

WHEREAS, Tommy Burnett served his fellow citizens energetically in numerous other capacities, including playing an instrumental role in helping to establish the Highway 127 Corridor Sale, which has been called the world's largest flea market; and

WHEREAS, in appreciation of his life and service to Fentress County, this body proposes to name a certain segment of State Route 28/U.S. Highway 127 to permanently commemorate the late S. Thomas Burnett's bountiful yet complicated life; now, therefore,

BE IT RESOLVED BY THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES OF THE ONE HUNDRED TWELFTH GENERAL ASSEMBLY OF THE STATE OF TENNESSEE, THE SENATE CONCURRING, that the segment of State Route 28/U.S. Highway 127 within Fentress County, beginning at the eastern boundary of the City of Jamestown, and ending at the intersection of such route with State Route 85, is hereby designated as the "Representative S. Thomas Burnett Highway" to honor the memory of this beloved and flawed public servant who served the residents of Fentress, Overton, and Morgan counties in the State House of Representatives for nearly twenty years.

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED, that the Department of Transportation is directed to erect suitable signs or to affix suitable markers designating such segment of State Route 28/U.S. Highway 127 as the "Representative S. Thomas Burnett Highway".

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED, that the erection of the signs must be within the guidelines prescribed by the *Manual on Uniform Traffic Control Devices*, and within state supplemental guidelines, as applicable.

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED, that this resolution becomes operative only if the cost of the manufacture and installation of the signs is paid to the Department of Transportation from nonstate funds within one (1) year of the effective date of this resolution. The payment must be made prior to any expenditure by the State for the manufacture or installation of the signs. The department shall return any unused portion of the estimated cost to the person or entity paying for the signs within thirty (30) days of the erection of the signs. If the actual cost exceeds the estimated cost, an amount equal to the difference in the costs shall be remitted to the department in nonstate funds within thirty (30) days of the sponsoring person or entity receiving an itemized invoice of the actual cost from the department.

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED, that the appellation "Representative S. Thomas Burnett Highway" provided for in this resolution is for honorary purposes only, and this resolution does not require the alteration of any address, or the governmental system for assigning addresses, in any county, municipality, or other governmental entity affected by this resolution or the alteration of any previously named segment or segments of State Route 28/U.S. Highway 127 described in this resolution as "Representative S. Thomas Burnett Highway".

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED, that an enrolled copy of this resolution be transmitted to the Commissioner of Transportation.

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED, that an appropriate copy of this resolution be prepared for presentation with the final two clauses omitted from such copy and upon proper request made to the appropriate clerk, the language appearing immediately following the State seal appear without House or Senate designation.